

# Busselton Brass – a Potted History

Busselton, a charming tourist town nestled around 230 kms south of Perth, along Geographe Bay in Western Australia, boasts a rich history. Established in 1832, this picturesque town, now home to 45,000 residents, thrives on various industries like tourism, mixed farming, vineyards and wineries, mineral sand mining and fishing.

The journey of Busselton Brass began in 1871 at a meeting in the Mechanics Institute Hall. Initially practising occurred in corrugated iron sheds made available by local businesses and band members. Their journey reached a significant milestone in July 1995 when they were gifted a purpose-built band room by the Shire of Busselton – a space they now call their permanent home for rehearsals and storage of instruments and music.



Early Band Photo—circa 1900

This community-focused band, Busselton Brass, warmly welcomes individuals of all ages to partake in the joy of music, either by playing an instrument or revelling in their performances. They have been an integral part of numerous local events and have proudly represented their town in State & National competitions. But the focus has always been on community in-

volvement in music making.

The City of Busselton awarded a prestigious honour to Busselton Brass in 2012 by granting them the Freedom of the City of Busselton for their exceptional service.

Minute books from 1913 are in the archives and make interesting and sometimes humorous reading. Those absenting themselves from practice were 'dealt with by the committee', but there is no mention of the punishments meted out! Smoking was forbidden at practices except during an interval when smokers had to vacate the band room. A musician attending a practice or performance under the effects of liquor was expelled. Between the two world wars, the Bandmasters were paid one pound (\$2) a week from funds collected by door knocking the local businesses and residents.

During the tumultuous times of World War 1 the Band marched with twelve recruits to the railway station from where they headed to the Front and warmly welcomed back nine veterans from the war in 1918.



Active Band Members during WW1

The Band's resilience was evident as they endured recesses during both World Wars but rose again after World War 2. Preparing for the troops return from WW2, the band was reformed on 8th April 1945.



Roll of Honour—1919

With few men in the town's small population at that time (females were yet to be accepted in brass bands) – school students were recruited and entrusted with the maintenance of the instruments that had



1920



1920

been stored away for six years. The local

council made a hall available for storage of instruments and it was to be the band room for the next 49 years. Six years in storage had seized the valves and slides and the yellow brass was black with Verdigris, dust, cobwebs and even the odd mouse nest.



Picnic 1920

When the troops arrived home and picked up their instruments again, the students were not really proficient enough, and were told in no uncertain terms that they were to mime during appearances because of their notoriously unreliable playing. The sound of one note could see a junior musician expelled!



1929 Unveiling the drinking fountain on corner Queen & Prinsep Street by G.W. Barnard M.L.A.

Their journey has been marked by memorable moments, such as performances before Queen Elizabeth 11 and the Duke of Edinburgh on Royal Visits to Busselton in 1954 & 2001, their triumph in competing in the 1998 National Band Competition in Melbourne as a 'D' Grade band where the band won the street march.



Approx 1929



1946 VP Day Parade WW2 in Busselton

The band has made three visits to the City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder (a 1600 km return trip): one in 2000 for a combined concert with the Goldfields Brass Band; another in 2003 for the Festival of Saint Barbara; and a third in 2023 when 10 Band members helped the Goldfields Band celebrate their 60th anniversary.

The band enjoyed a concert tour to Japan in 2003, visiting Busselton's sister city, Sugito (an outer suburb of Tokyo). Players were accommodated through home-stay billets and performed at diverse venues to enthusiastic audiences. Despite their primary focus not being competitions, they have participated in various events and tasted success.

More than a century and a half later, Busselton Brass continues to be the musical heart of the Busselton community.



Approx 1950



Approx 1970